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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to develop and validate a measure of counselor empathy. A pilot study was conducted with 72 undergraduate students and 12 graduate students in order to develop the Empathic Differential (ED)D. Twenty-one bi-polar objectives were yielded significant through intercorrelation analysis. The validation study yielded a significant correlation between The Empathic Differential (ED)D and A Scale for the Measurement of Accurate Empathy. (Author)

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The Development and Validation of a Semantic Measure of Counselor Empathy

by

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The counselor with empathic attitudes and behaviors would also be expected to be effective in facilitating client growth and change. This humanistic imperative has been theoretically espoused by various psychotherapeutic orientations (Brammer and Schostrom, 1964; Cameron, 1963; Fenichel, 1941; Fleiss, 1942, Fiedler, 1950, Monroe, 1955, Patterson, 1962, 1969; Rogers, 1957) and has been empirically investigated and demonstrated through an ongoing series of studies (Rogers, et. al. 1967; Truax, 1961, 1963; Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

Although most of the traditional measures of empathy have utilized either verbal, auditory or kinesthetic stimuli (Buchheimer, Goodman and Sircus. 1965; Chapman, 1966; Carkhuff, 1969; Gazda 1973; Kagan, Krathwohl, Farquhar, 1965; Rank, 1964; Reid and Snyder, 1947; Rogers, et. at. 1967; Thorsen, 1968; Wasson, 1965), there has been at least one study that has taken advantage of our contemporary "bio-feedback age". Gellen (1970) attempted to measure the counselors' ability to express affect rather than the counselors' ability to communicate personal perceptions of another persons' feelings. He assessed four physiological variables (respiration, heart rate, galvanic skin response and finger blood volume) while 30 counselors, 30 counselor-trainees and 30 graduate science majors evaluated a series of dramatic dialogues and slides taken from an empathy test. This study found that significantly more vaso-constriction was observed in the counselors and the counselor-trainees than the graduate science majors. This study may stimulate the counseling profession toward exploratory directions within the area of physiological reactions and differential counselor empathy. Although more research in the physiological measurement of empathy is predicted and encouraged, suffice it

to say, that most counselor education programs cannot, as yet, afford the expenditures for the elaborate equipment and interdisciplinary retraining.

It is in this light that the present study is reported. The purpose of this investigation was to develop and validate an original form of the Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci, Tannenbaum, 1957) to measure the psychological construct of counselor empathy.

Procedure

The entire study was divided into two parts: the developmental pilot study and the validation study. Each will be described separately.

The Developmental Pilot Study

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 72 juniors enrolled in an undergraduate educational psychology course and 12 graduate counselor-trainees enrolled in a counseling and guidance practicum at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. All the subjects completed three instruments in which they were asked to rate a group of statements and a group of descriptive adjectives in terms of how each statement and adjective reflected the concept of counselor accurate empathy.

Instruments

A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (Truax, 1961) are descriptions of nine performance levels of counselor empathy. Accompanying each of the nine levels of accurate empathy are two client/counselor dialogue sets. Each dialogue set is empirically believed to be reflective of a particular level of counselor empathy (Truax, 1961). The first instrument was developed by extracting 21 key adjectives from the Scale and then choosing a synonym for each from Marches' Thesaurus Dictionary (1958). Each of the sets of bi-polar

adjectives were presented in a nine point semantic differential format. The subjects were asked to rate each of the bi-polar adjectives as to how much they reflected the concept of accurate empathy. The second instrument merely extended the one just described and generated 43 bi-polar adjectives. The additional bi-polar adjectives were selected from a series of antonyms and synonyms also taken from Marches' Thesaurus Dictionary (1958). These 43 bi-polar adjectives were then arranged in semantic differential form, also using a nine point likert continuum. The subjects were also asked to rate each of these 43 adjectives as to how much they reflected the concept of accurate empathy. The third instrument utilized was the Relationship Questionaire (Truax, 1961). A total of 46 items reflecting the concept of accurate empathy were extracted and then presented to the subjects for rating on a nine point continuum.

Analyses and Results

The interrelationships among each item of the three instruments were calculated by a product-moment correlation. It was found that all of the original 21 bi-polar adjectives were found to be significant at the .05 level. A further analysis of those 21 bi-polar adjectives was computed through a factor analytic technique. The purpose of this analysis was to select those scales, which taken together, could define the attitudinal dimension of accurate empathy. Table I contains the factor loadings on the four obtained semantic factors. The first factor was named the Empathy factor and included 13 bi-polar adjective sets. The second factor was called the Activity factor and included 5 bi-polar adjective sets. The third factor was called the Potency factor and included two scales

while the Integrity factor included only one scale. The entire instrument was called the Empathic Differential. $(ED)^D$

Table I

Varimax Loadings Obtained from the Total Sample of 84 Subjects

	Empathic Differential Scales	I	II	III	IV
1.	Understanding-nonunderstanding	*81	-03	16	30
2.	Nonpersuasive-persuasive	-19	29	*74	23
3.	Nonperceptive-perceptive	*72	15	07	14
4.	Knowing-unknowing	*76	-01	-26	-11
5.	Comfortable-uncomfortable	*64	-04	-09	43
6.	Disagreeing-agreeing	-21	*74	03	09
7.	Nonverbal-verbal	-05	*73	15	-07
8.	Insensitive-sensitive	*-56	28	-22	36
9.	Selfish-sharing	-30	*55	-17	-26
10.	Honest-pretending	23	-26	-01	*78
11.	Nonsuggestive-suggestive	00	*57	43	-16
12.	Relating-unrelating	*63	-23	03	06
13.	Caring-uncaring	*79	-04	24	21
14.	Listening-nonlistening	*62	-27	37	10
15.	Nonrestrictive-restrictive	20	-09	*78	-19
16.	Trusting-distrusting	*73	01	25	-08
17.	Liking-disliking	*74	-14	-02	13

*Indicates word with highest factor loadings.

The Validation Study

Subjects

The subjects for the validation study were 9 counselor-trainees enrolled in a counseling and guidance practicum at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Instruments

Each of the nine counselor-trainees and their respective clients completed the Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ after each counseling session. The client rated himself while the counselor-trainee rated the client in terms of how the

counselor perceived the client would rate himself. Thus, both persons rated the client. These two instruments were scored and compared for the perceptual differences by generating a discrepancy score. This discrepancy score served as the basis for the counselors empathic behavior for each counseling session. A mean of the discrepancy scores was computed for each counselor-trainee and thus, indicated the operative level of counselor empathy. Thus, the lower the discrepancy score, the more operative the counselor empathy while the higher the discrepancy score, the less operative the counselor empathy.

The second instrument in the validation study was a Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961). As was mentioned earlier, the Scale describes nine levels of accurate empathy. It was originally designed for the measurement of live counseling behavior or tape recordings of counseling interviews. Reliability and validity of the instrument have been established through a series of extended studies (Rogers, et. al. 1967; Truax, 1961, 1963; Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

The Training of the Raters

Three persons who were unfamiliar with the subjects of the study were trained to discriminate among the nine levels of accurate empathy as described in A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961). After a period of rating a series of counseling sessions on a Training Tape, the raters judged the 49 ten minute data samples of the nine counselor-trainees. An inter-rater reliability coefficient of .70 was suggested by Melloh (1964) before the raters were considered to be rating the data samples reliably. Table II illustrates the reliability coefficients of the three raters for the 49 data samples.

Table II

Inter-rater Reliability Coefficients
for the 49 Data Samples

r_1 and 2*	r_1 and 3*	r_2 and 3*	Combined r
.77**+	.77**+	.83**+	.79**+

*Subscript numbers refer to judges.

+Correlation coefficients have been averaged by just converting them to Fisher's z-statistic and reconverting the mean value of an r.

**All coefficients are significant at the 1 percent level.

Analyses and Results

The product moment correlation between the Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ and A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961) for the nine counselor trainees is presented in Table III. The correlation between the two measures of counselor empathy was -.7251 (significant at or beyond the .05 level). The correlation value in Table III indicated that there is a significant relationship between the two measures. The reason for the negative value is that a lower score on the Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ indicates high levels of counselor empathy while in A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961) a high score indicates high levels of counselor empathy. Thus, a negative correlation coefficient.

Table III

Correlation Coefficient Between The Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ And A Scale For The Measurement Of Accurate Empathy (AE)

Number of Subjects	Correlation Coefficient	Needed for Significance
9	-.7521*	-.666

*Significant at or beyond the .05 level.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that, for nine counselor trainees, two independent measures of counselor empathy are significantly related to each other. Thus, a counselor who receives a high empathy rating on A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961), would be expected to receive a low rating on counselor empathy as measured by the Empathic Differential. $(ED)^D$

If one looks further at the data generated within the study, it would indicate that the counselor-trainees displayed mean accurate empathy scores ranging from levels 1.0 to 4.1. The mean accurate empathy score for the group of counselor-trainees was found to be a level of 2.5. This finding is generally consistant with previous research conducted with A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961). Bergin and Solomon (1963) found a mean accurate empathy rating of 2.5 for 18 post internship students in clinical psychology. Antenen and Lister (1968) reported a mean accurate empathy level of 2.5 for 58 master's degree students at the culmination of a practicum experience.

Similarly, Melloh (1964) found a mean accurate empathy level at 2.4 for 28 NDEA Institute enrollees at the completion of their first counseling practicum. These findings indicate that all these counselors, at best, were responding accurately only to the clients more exposed and obvious feelings. Moreover, although the counselors sensed some deep feelings in the clients, they were unable to understand their meaning (Truax, 1961). This conclusion was representative of the first three levels of empathy which is considered to be low empathy (Truax, 1961).

Most importantly, the Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ and A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961) were significantly related in their ability to identify the empathic behavior of the counselor-trainees within the actual counseling session.

Furthermore, it concluded that beginning counselors in this and other studies manifested rather low levels of empathy. Thus, as a result of further validation research, it is suggested that the Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ may have merit as an instrument for training and evaluation of counselors.

Finally, the relationship between the Empathic Differential $(ED)^D$ and A Scale For The Measurement of Accurate Empathy (AE) (Truax, 1961) is of significant magnitude to conclude that the underlying construct of accurate empathy is superimposed within the two instruments. Also, it may be speculated that this is the type of relationship one might expect with a measure developed from such a theoretical basis.

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